# LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE YOM KIPPUR

BY

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# LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE

## ESSAYS ON YOM KIPPUR

Published by the

Jewish Discovery Center

Institute for Jewish Studies

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Dedicated to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who, more than any Jewish leader, has prepared us for Moshiach and the imminent Redemption

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# INTRODUCTION

The following collection of essays on *Yom Kippur* was taken from the weekly Torah messages that I have been sending to hundreds of individuals over the past 23 years.

These messages were written in the spirit of the talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Several of them are actually based on or adaptations of his essays and discourses on the parsha.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe declared that we are living in unique times. He applied the words of the Midrash to our day:

> "The time of your Redemption has arrived."

The Rebbe stated further that the straightforward way for us to bring about the actual Redemption is by learning what the Torah says about Moshiach and Redemption. While learning Torah in general has the capacity to change our mindset, learning about Moshiach and Redemption has the capacity to alter of exile-constrained way of thinking and cultivating a liberating manner of thinking.

In this spirit, each one of these messages concludes with an application of the Torah lesson of that week to our understanding of Moshiach and Redemption, as well as to help us prepare for the coming of Moshiach and the imminent Redemption.

It is my fervent hope that these essays will contribute to the process of changing our *galus*/exile mindset into a Moshiach mindset, which is effected by the study of these themes in Torah.. And may this effort contribute to the imminent Redemption through our righteous Moshiach. Amen.

# ESSAY ONE

# THE ONE AND ONLY

**On Yom Kippur the most unique level of the soul, called the Yechidah, can be reached and expressed.**

**This explains why, only on Yom Kippur, we pray five different prayers.**

**These five prayers are designed to reveal all of the five levels of the soul, including *yechidah*.**

# ESSAY ONE

## THE ONE AND ONLY

### Fives names of the soul

Yom Kippur is referred to in the Torah as "*achat b'shanah*-a single day of the year." The *Tosphot* commentary on the Talmud explains that this term *Achat* refers to the soul that is called *yechidah*-singular or unique. Hence, Yom Kippur is the day that we get in touch with our soul.

However, we know that the soul is known by four other names: *nefesh, ruach, neshama* and *chaya*. Why is Yom Kippur described as a day when we get in touch with *yechidah* specifically? Why doesn't it say that it is the day of *nefesh*, or the day of *ruach* etc.?

To answer this question we must also answer another question about the name *yechidah*. All the other names with which we identify the soul denote a spiritual life force. Only the fifth name, *yechidah*, does not mean life force, but rather "singular" or "unique." How does singularity or uniqueness apply to the soul?

In truth, the five names relate to and describe five distinct layers of the soul, each of which is responsible for different spiritual expressions and functions of the soul.

While the four other names of the soul express the soul's characteristics, the name *yechidah* expresses the uniqueness of the soul even in relation to its other levels.

## Five prayers of Yom Kippur and being touched by Yechidah

It follows then, that on Yom Kippur this most unique level of the soul can be reached and expressed. This also explains why, only on Yom Kippur, we pray **five** different prayers. These five prayers are designed to reveal all of the five levels of the soul, including *yechidah*.

What precisely does it mean that we have touched our yechidah and how does it differ from the way the other four levels of the soul are expressed?

When a person does something good, there can be many different motivating factors. Each one of these motivating factors derives from a different level of the soul.

One can do the right thing because one has been physically conditioned to do it (*nefesh*) while others will do good because they love doing good (*ruach*). There is still another individual who does good because it makes sense logically (*neshama*). Some will do what is right because their intellectual faculties dictate that it is the right thing to do.

There are yet some people who may lack the conditioning, love, understanding to do good, but they still do it because they just want to do it. Their conscience (read: the level of *chaya*) motivates them to submit and surrender to G-d's will. This Will-power can get a person to do something that is totally alien to their personality.

These four motivating factors—conditioning, emotion, understanding and will-power—represent the four levels of the soul that can be accessed throughout the entire year.

What is unique about Yom Kippur is that we are then capable of expressing the fifth level of *yechidah,* the singular and unique dimension of the soul as well. This is the state of doing that which is right not because of any motivating factor. One does that which G-d wants simply because one feels that one cannot do anything else. To do something due to the other levels of motivation suggests that there is a basis for inaction,

and one has to bring one faculty or another to bear to get the person to do that which is right.

When the Yechidah is revealed, on Yom Kippur, however, we don't need motivation. That which is G-d's desire is automatically ours. This is because the level of Yechidah is so intimately bound with the singularity of G-d, that there can just not be any other course of action for this individual. Our will is G-d's will.

## Leaving the Temple

The purpose of Yom Kippur, however, is to allow the *yechidah* experience of Yom Kippur affect all the other levels of our soul.

To be inspired on Yom Kippur to the point where we are inextricable bound with G-d is not the goal. The goal is to take that uniqueness and instill it in the lower levels of the soul. Our conscience, intellect, emotions and physical faculties of our soul should be inspired by the yechidah.

This explains why Maimonides—based on the Talmud—describes the service of Yom Kippur in the Temple of old and concludes with the description of the High Priest going home **after** the service. Of what

relevance to the Yom Kippur service is the description of the High Priest's return home?

The answer is that that is precisely what Yom Kippur is all about: it is to take the part of the soul that is singular and make it a part of all aspects of our personalities.

## Perpetual Yechidah

Kabbalah teaches us that during the Messianic Age our yechidah will be revealed perpetually. It will be Yom Kippur every day. It doesn't mean that we will be observing Yom Kippur with all of its physical denial. Rather it means that the post-Yom Kippur state—where we take the Yechidah home with us—will be perpetual.

Moshiach himself is chosen to be the leader that will usher in the Messianic Age because his Yechidah is perpetually alert. And it is through his inspiration—energy generated from his yechidah to ours—that enables us to discover our innermost spiritual powers. It reveals our singularity; the Yom Kippur of our souls.

May we all be sealed for a good and sweet year, a year that will known for its uniqueness in terms of the G-dly blessings that will prevail.

# ESSAY TWO

# THE YOM KIPPUR LOTTERY

**No matter how compelling it might seem for one to go in the wrong direction, one has the G-d given power to transcend the realm of logic, and choose to go down the right path.**

**No matter how strong the forces to do evil may be, the divine power of free choice is even greater.**

# ESSAY TWO

## THE YOM KIPPUR LOTTERY

### The Two Goats

One of Judaism's most enigmatic rituals was the "*Sa'ir l'azazel*– the Scapegoat." Every Yom Kippur, as recounted in this week's Torah portion, the Jewish people would offer two goats as sacrifices: one was offered in the traditional manner in the Temple and the other was thrown off a rugged cliff. To decide which of the two identical goats would stay within the Temple confines and which one would be pushed off the cliff, lots were cast.

As Yom Kippur rituals, both of these offerings served as a means of atonement for the Jewish people.

Several questions come to mind:

First, why two offerings?

Second why was one of the offerings not brought in the Temple as all other offerings are?

Third, why did they decide which was offered in the Temple and which outside of the Temple, by casting lots?

## Parallel Forces

Chassidic literature refers to the fact that the word Azazel, is an acronym for the Biblical phrase: "*Es zeh le'umas zeh asah Elokim*-This corresponding to the other did G-d make." This statement teaches that for all the forces of good and holiness in the world, G-d created a corresponding measure of evil and unholiness. By creating both good and evil, G-d gave us the opportunity to choose between right and wrong, thus endowing our actions with purpose and meaning.

## Can We Change?

Yom Kippur is the day that we are required to "do" teshuvah, to repent, return to G-d and change ourselves. How can we really change? Can we truly transform our behavior and character? If we have a predilection to one type of behavior, how realistic is the Torah's demand that we change it?

The answer is provided by the two goats and the symbolism behind them. One goat - representing good

– stays inside the Temple, while the other, representing evil, is cast down a cliff outside the Temple. As was stated earlier, the decision as to which goat went where was made by casting lots. It is because the lots that were cast were not just arbitrary criteria, but were G-d's way of showing us that His decision, as to which goat should remain in the Temple and which goat should not, was not based on logic, but on G-d's ability to transcend logic and reason.

Similarly, no matter how compelling it might seem for one to go in the wrong direction, one has the G-d given power to transcend the realm of logic, and choose to go down the right path. No matter how strong the forces to do evil may be, the divine power of free choice is even greater.

## Transcending Logic

The arbitrariness of the lottery system in determining where the goats would go, underscores Judaism's insistence that we do not limit our dedication to good and repudiation of evil to the limits imposed by logic and reason. We must do good even when it seems to be unreasonable and flies in the face of logic. And when logic says that it is good enough, we must become "unreasonable" – ignore the limits of reason –

and go beyond the borders of goodness imposed by that logic.

Conversely, we must reject evil, even when one cannot find a compelling reason to do so. And we must repudiate evil beyond the rational reasons one has for such rejection. Our rejection of evil must be utter and absolute, not measured and calculated.

## Distracted from Moshiach?

The Talmud declares that Moshiach will come "*B'hesech hada'as* (literally: with a removal of the mind)-when our minds are distracted from him." Commentators question how this is possible in light of the imperative to eagerly anticipate Moshiach's arrival every moment.

The answer provide by Chassidic thought is that Moshiach's coming and the subsequent Redemption will inaugurate an age when our commitment to G-d and Torah will transcend logic and reason. Moshiach will make "*hesech hada'as*," he will "remove our minds" not by turning off our minds, but after reaching the limits of logic and reasoning, he will introduce us to a higher level of awareness, one that transcends reasoning and logic.

# ESSAY THREE

# ODD COMBINATION

**Although it sounds irrational, the highest and lowest realms can reside in the same person or situation.**

# ESSAY THREE

## ODD COMBINATION

### The Peak of Holiness and the Nadir of Depravity

This week's Torah portion of Acharei has been noted for its unusual combination of themes. It begins with a description of the service of the Kohain Gadol (High Priest), in the Holy Temple on Yom Kippur. There can be no greater amalgamation of holiness. The Kohain Gadol was the holiest Jew; the Holy Temple was the holiest place on Earth and the day of Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the year!

Yet, the end of this week's Torah portion of Acharei deals with the most reprehensible immoral acts, such as incest, adultery and so on. Why would the Torah wish to juxtapose the most sacred of experiences with the most base forms of human behavior?

Furthermore, this Torah reading that we will be reading this Shabbat is also the Torah reading for Yom Kippur. Why would a Jew on this solemn day of the year, when every Jew rises above the ordinary and is

closer to G-d, have to be admonished not to commit the most degrading acts of immorality?

## The Higher it is the Lower it can Affect

The answer lies in a better understanding of the function of Yom Kippur, the Kohain Gadol and the Holy Temple. From the perspective of Judaism, the more holy something is, the greater its capacity to "reach down" and to affect even the lowliest aspects of life. Only the holiest Jew can refine and uplift the lowliest Jew. Only the holiest day of the year can instill sanctity in the most ordinary days of the year and only the

Holy Temple could disseminate light and holiness to the farthest reaches of the world.

The objective of Judaism is to see to it that everyone is ultimately refined and capable of having a relationship with G-d. This can only be accomplished if those of us who are more knowledgeable and spiritually more sophisticated reach out to those who appear lost to the Jewish people.

Parshas Acharei is usually read soon after the Passover Holiday. At the Seder we respond to the questions of the Four Sons. It has been pointed out that the *rasha*- wicked or rebellious son is placed and addressed right

after the *chacham*-wise son. The question has been raised why place the one who is farthest from the Passover experience with the one who is closest to it?

The Previous Rebbe answered that only the wise son, can affect the *rasha* the wicked or rebellious son.

## The Hierarchy of Generations

There is a belief that our generation is the lowest of all preceding generation sin terms of it spiritual standing. This belief is buttressed by the statement in the Talmud that as generations progress the people regress:

> If the earlier generations were like angels we are like people. If they are like people we are like donkeys..

The rationale for this is based on the fact that as time goes on we are further removed from the most defining event of history, the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. At that momentous event, G-d revealed Himself to every Jew. The further away from that event the less we are imbued with the spirit of Sinai.

In general terms this belief is indeed valid and is clearly evident in the number of Jews who have strayed so far from the ideals of Judaism.

Thus, the Alter Rebbe in his classic work the Tanya cites the characterization of our period as the "heel" of time, as compared to the generation of Moses which is described as the "head" generation.

## The Uniqueness of Our Lowest-Highest Generation

However, precisely because we are, in many ways, the lowliest generation and the farthest from Sinai, we are in need of the highest form of spiritual leadership. In Chassidic circles it is accepted that from the Ba'al Shem Tov onward, G-d has unleashed the most lofty of souls to help uplift the fallen souls of our final generations before the Final redemption.

Moreover, although we are at the most distant point from Sinai, chronologically speaking, we are the closest to the revolutionary new Divine revelations of the Messianic Age.

Our close proximity to the time of Redemption give us an edge over all the preceding generations.

Our generation with its paradoxical lowliness and sublime light is the model for the Messianic Age. It will reveal the highest degree of holiness and will therefore will permeate even the lowest and lowliest precincts of existence. As the prophet states, "All flesh will see G-dliness." Then even the basest of existence will be

transformed because of the presence of the most sublime G-dly light.

# ESSAY FOUR

# ONE DAY

**Yom Kippur is much more than a Day of Atonement.**

**It is a day of "At-one-ment" where we experience total unity with G-d.**

# ESSAY FOUR

## ONE DAY

### Why mention "Once a Year?"

Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, occurs in the month of Tishrei. Nevertheless, we read of this Holy Day several times throughout the year in our weekly Torah portions. In this week's parsha, Acharei-Kedoshim, the Torah goes into elaborate detail concerning the offerings that were to be brought to the Beis Hamikdash-the Holy Temple - by the Kohain Gadol-the High Priest.

The Torah describes Yom Kippur, in Acharei-Kedoshim as "*achas bashanah,"* routinely translated as a "once a year" observance.

Why is it necessary to state here that it is only one day a year? Only a few verses earlier, the Torah explicitly states that Yom Kippur is observed on the tenth day of the month of Tishrei. It also states that "on this **day** G-d shall atone for you." There is no obvious need to repeat that Yom Kippur is a one day Holiday.

## One day "*in* the year"

Another difficulty arises when we consider the literal translation of the words "*achas bashanah*." Instead of "once a year," the literal rendition is: "Once **in** the year." Why the emphasis on the fact that it is one day "in" the year? What other place could the day be if not "in the year?"

There is one other place where the Torah employs the expression "in the year" with regard to a Holiday. In a subsequent parsha (*Vayikra* 23:40-41) that discusses the festival of Sukkos, the Torah states:

> "...You should rejoice before G-d your G-d, for a period of seven days. You should celebrate it as a festival to G-d for seven days **in the year**..."

Here too, the Torah adds the preposition "in" in relation to the word "year." Why does this phenomenon only occur with regard to Yom Kippur and Sukkos?

Furthermore, what do these two Holidays have in common? On the surface, Yom Kippur and Sukkos seem to be complete opposites. The former is a solemn day of fasting and prayer, whereas the latter is a period of incredible joy and feasting.

## The Five Names of the Soul

The Hebrew word for "one" that the Torah employs here is *achas*. According to Rabbenu Nissim, cited by the Tosphos commentary on the Talmud (*Menachos* 18a) that term has another connotation as well. *Achas* refers to the level of the soul called "*yechidah*."

To explain the significance of *yechidah* and its relationship to Yom Kippur, it is necessary to elaborate on the Midrash and Zohar's description of the five levels of the G-dly soul. They are listed in ascending order as: *nefesh, ru'ach, neshama, chaya* and *yechidah.*

## Nefesh-Ruach-Neshama: Action, Emotion and Intellect

The first and lowest level of the soul, *nefesh*, is identified as the part of the soul that is responsible for our actions. When a Jew is motivated to do a Mitzvah and is engaged in its performance, it is the *nefesh* that is expressing itself.

When we invest our actions with emotion, love and awe, it is the level of *ru'ach* that is active within us.

To develop a profound understanding of the Mitzvah and a deep intellectual awareness of G-d's greatness, we must bring the next level of the soul, called *neshama*, to the fore.

## Chaya-Will; Yechidah-Delight

However, the Jew who is able to exercise a tremendous will-power, one that enables him or her to go beyond his or her understanding and sacrifice physical comfort and personal needs to fulfill the will of G-d, is actually being empowered by the transcendent aspect of his or her soul called *chaya.*

However, the highest and most powerful level of the soul—sometimes identified as the soul's very essence—is the *yechidah.* From the vantage point of the *yechidah* there is no need to sacrifice oneself to G-d. Sacrifice implies that there are two disparate entities, one of which must surrender itself to the other. But on the level of *yechidah*, the Jew feels such an intrinsic attachment to G-d that there is no sense that he or she is surrendering to Him.

In addition, at the level of *yechidah* one is in touch with the inner delight that is the source of all other faculties. Why do we harbor the desire for something? It arises when our inner delight motivates us to want that particular something. It's the inner delight that motivates us to use our *nefesh* and *ru'ach* to think, emote and act. It is the source of all else that transpires in our lives.

## The Yom Kippur Five

On Yom Kippur, we are required to pray five times, as opposed to Shabbos and other Holidays when there are only four required prayers.

Chassidic literature explains that these five prayers correspond to and affect all of the five levels of the soul. When we reach the concluding prayer of *ne'ilah*, the soul's *yechidah is* expressed. That experience is so powerful that it can totally transform the person who, for whatever reason, was incapable of being so inspired throughout the rest of the year. And while the entire day of Yom Kippur is a day of five prayers, implying that the level of *yechidah* is present throughout the day, it is most dominant during the fifth prayer, *ne'ilah.*

We can now understand why the Torah refers to Yom Kippur in Acharei-Kedoshim as "*achas*." It is intended to teach us that Yom Kippur not just a one day Holiday but rather is a day when the *achas*, i.e., the *yechidah*, is fully revealed.

We can now also answer the second question posed above, why the Torah refers to the day as "one day **in** the year."

This can be resolved in light of the foregoing understanding of *achas* as the level of *yechidah*, but first a prefatory story is in order.

## Tefillin "On" the Head or "In" the Head?

Once, when a Czarist official observed the Alter Rebbe wearing his Tefillin, the official was overcome with dread. When a Chosid asked the Alter Rebbe to explain this incident, he replied by referring to a passage in the Talmud:

> Rabbi Eliezer the Great stated: "When the Torah says, 'And all the nations of the earth will see the name of G-d called upon you and they will fear you,' it was referring to the Head Tefillin."

Thus, when the Czarist official noticed my Tefillin he was overcome with fear."

The Chosid then asked the Alter Rebbe, "Why doesn't that happen when I wear Tefillin? It does not elicit any fearful reaction by the nations who notice me wearing them."

The Alter Rebbe replied:

> "In the Talmudic text it does not say that Tefillin that we wear **on** the head evoke fear. Rather it says, Tefillin that are **in** the head."

By this, the Alter Rebbe makes it clear that for the Tefillin to be awe inspiring to an outsider it must be internalized within one's head. The message of Tefillin, which is G-d's absolute unity, must become an integral part of one's consciousness.

Here too, we may suggest, when the Torah describes the day of Yom Kippur as a day of *achas*, a day when the *yechidah* of the soul is revealed, it cannot be allowed to dissipate when Yom Kippur is over. The Torah exhorts us to extend the effect of the *yechidah* that we experienced on Yom Kippur **into** the other days of the year. However, the message here is that it does not suffice for it to be extended **to** the other days of the year; instead it must be *achas bashanah*, one day, a *yechidah* day, **in** the days of the year.

Yom Kippur poses a unique challenge that does not exist in other Holidays. Because of Yom Kippur's singular role as G-d's designated Day of Atonement it captures the *yechidah.* One would thus be entitled to think that it is impossible to have this Yom Kippur/*yechidah* experience any other time of the year. To dispel this notion the Torah states, "*achas bashanah*," one can take the *achas/yechidah* and instill it **into** the rest of the year.

There is a similar challenge with the Festival of Sukkos, which requires and empowers us to celebrate for a full cycle of seven days. Could we reasonably contemplate the idea of bringing that powerful joy to the rest of the year? Most would say that it is simply impossible. To dispel that notion, here too, the Torah states "seven days **in** the year." These seven days do not have to end

with the culmination of Sukkos. They can be extended and instilled within the rest of the year.

## Moshiach: The Yechidah of Souls

How can we take the profound soul experiences of Yom Kippur or the unmitigated Festival joy of Sukkos into an ordinary weekday?

To answer this question we must recall the teaching of Kabbalah and Chassidus that there were/are five unique personalities who represent the five soul-modalities mentioned above. King David represented all the souls on the level of *nefesh*. Elijah represented *ru'ach*, Moses *neshama*, Adam *chaya* while Moshiach will embodies the level of *yechidah*.

When we connect our lives to Moshiach and focus our attention on what we can do to bring Moshiach and the Final Redemption in our days, we can then experience the level of *yechidah.*

The "mere" desire to be there places us there in consonance with what the Ba'al Shem Tov taught: "A person is where his will is." If we truly *want* to be with Moshiach—and express that desire sincerely by attempting to live our lives in harmony with the ideals of Moshiach—we are there!

When we live a Moshiach life we ignite the internal spark of Moshiach within us—our *yechidah*—and we get a taste of the profound joy of Sukkos that is a portent of the perennial joy we will experience in the Messianic Age

# ESSAY FIVE

# RISING ABOVE TIME

**Instead of just focusing on our past misdeeds or on resolving for the future, on Yom Kippur we discover who we really are now. Our essential bond with G-d is revealed.**

**When we know who we are, regretting the past and resolving for the future are no longer the overriding issue.**

**Being a Yom Kippur person is, in and of itself, the most forceful repudiation of a negative past and a guarantee of a positive future.**

# ESSAY FIVE

## RISING ABOVE TIME

### What's New?

Preparations for Yom Kippur have already begun a month before Rosh Hashanah, during the month of *Elul*. That entire month was to be devoted to introspection and stock taking, resolutions and commitments, repentance and renewal. If that did not suffice, we were given the Ten days of Repentance, also known as the Days of Awe, starting with Rosh Hashanah, followed by seven days of *Teshuvah,* each day corresponding to a day of the week of the past year. After all of that intense preparation we finally arrive at Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

It is at this point that the question begs to be asked: What is it that is new about this day? If an entire month, and then some, did not suffice for us to mend our ways and make sincere resolutions for the future, what more can we be expected to accomplish on Yom Kippur?

## "Now" is Teshuvah

To answer this question, let us refer to a statement from the Midrash, "The expression "now" refers exclusively to Teshuvah. What does that mean?

When a person repents, there are two elements that are most pronounced: Regret for one's behavior in the **past** and a sincere resolution for the **future**. There is, however, a third element that transcends and unifies the two others.

To explain: Some people will be sorry they did something wrong, but lack the spiritual strength to make changes for the future. In the words of our Sages: "The wicked are always full of regrets." While they might realize the error of their ways, they lack the determination to translate their remorse into a changed or even improved behavior in the future.

Conversely, there are some who find it relatively easy to make resolutions, especially at the beginning of the year. They do have difficulty in really feeling contrite about their past. They would rather put their past behind them, forget it, ignore it; they cannot deal with it. The problem is that notwithstanding their sincere resolve for the future, not having eradicated their desire for their errant behavior, they are likely to succumb to temptation the next time around.

## Past, Future and the Here and Now

The month of *Elul* was primarily for dealing with the past.

Rosh Hashanah, the day that we accept G-d as our King, and the days that follow, we added the dimension of resolve for the future.

It can be suggested that on Yom Kippur—in addition to reinforcing these elements of Teshuvah—we deal with the "here and now" dimension as well.

Instead of just focusing on our **past** misdeeds or on resolving for the **future**, on Yom Kippur we discover who we really are **now**. Our essential bond with G-d is revealed. And when we know who we are, regretting the past and resolving for the future are no longer the overriding issue. The purity of our soul that comes to the surface prevents any of the past entanglements from getting in our way. We don't have to generate feelings of remorse, because we are now new people, completely detached from the negativity of the past. Similarly, because of our new spiritual status, we do not require resolutions for the future.

Being a Yom Kippur person is, in and of itself, the most forceful repudiation of a negative past and a guarantee of a positive future.

## Timelessness

On a still deeper and more mystical plane it can be said that on Yom Kippur we rise to a level of timelessness, where the past and future are consolidated into the present.

With this premise we can better understand the significance of the *Kol Nidrei* prayer recited at the beginning of Yom Kippur. Many have asked, what does the renunciation of vows have to do with Yom Kippur? And why is it such a solemn prayer, considering that it is just a legal formula to guarantee that we will not be guilty of breaking any of our future vows?

The answer lies in the foregoing premise that Teshuvah—especially on Yom Kippur—goes beyond remorse for the past and resolution for the future. It is about the **present** attachment to G-d. As such, on Yom Kippur we no longer need to make vows and commitments for the future because our present attachment to G-d—revealed and actualized throughout Yom Kippur—will distance us from our errant past and keep us straight in the future.

We therefore renounce our vows, in the *Kol Nidrei* service, as a way of saying: we do not need to keep ourselves straight by making vows, we can accomplish the same by allowing our spiritual essence to be actualized on Yom Kippur.

Perhaps this is the meaning of the verse in this week's Parsha (Ha'azinu): "See **now,** for it is I. I am the only, there is no other G-d with Me." One interpretation of this verse is that when we realize our G-dly identity, that I, the person, am indeed imbued with "I, the only one" - G-d, then one can see and appreciate the here and **now**.

One of the characteristics of living in an imperfect world is that we can rarely focus on the "now" of life, because we are burdened by the past and worried about the future. This preoccupation with the past and the future often robs us of the ability to experience fully the present. Our life, in effect, becomes a series of fleeting and elusive moments. This is one of the major ills associated with exile.

## Liberated from the Scars of the Past and the Anxieties for the Future

In the Messianic Age, however, we will be liberated not only from the shackles of despotic regimes and the preoccupation with the physical needs of life, but also from the constraints of time. Every moment will be rich and fulfilling. We will not be robbed of our ability to appreciate the here and now by the memories and scars of the past, and we will not suffer from anxiety as to how to secure the future.

On Yom Kippur, however, we are given a taste of the future; a respite from the obsession with the past and the anxiety over the future. We can live fully in the here and now, if only for a 24 hour period.

To show how much we savor these precious moments, we sound the Shofar at the end of the day and declare "Next year in Jerusalem!" We thereby declare that when G-d will herald the future Redemption by sounding the Great Shofar, we will be in a perpetual state of "here and now," where every moment will be lived to the fullest extent.

# ESSAY SIX

# FEASTING AND FASTING

Everything possesses spiritual energy.

But, G-d deliberately hid much of this energy so that we, the human beings, utilizing our intelligence and choice to do good, can discover that energy and then unleash it.

Where does G-d hide this spiritual energy?

In levels of existence that are lower than the human being. By making us depend on food, we have the ability to "find" the hidden "sparks of holiness" contained in the food.

# ESSAY SIX

## FEASTING AND FASTING

### Which does G-d Desire?

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement is characterized by the obligation to fast from sundown of the eve of Yom Kippur until after dark of the next day. It is obvious that fasting is considered to be a powerful medium for repentance and change.

Ironically, there is also an obligation to feast the day before Yom Kippur. As our Talmudic sages comment:

> "One who eats and drinks the day before Yom Kippur is regarded as if they had fasted two days."

How do we explain this dichotomous approach to fasting and feasting? Which one is the desirable approach to returning to G-d? Granted, there is a need to eat before the fast to enable us to fast, but if fasting is such an ideal, why does the Talmud make such a fuss about feasting before the fast?

## Fasting and Feasting are Two Sides of the Same Coin.

In truth, from a spiritual perspective, fasting and feasting are two sides of the same coin.

And since the feasting precedes the fasting, let us try to understand first the dynamics of feasting, from a spiritual vantage point, and then the dynamics of fasting.

On the surface, it would seem that feasting is the more "normal" state of existence. After all, a human being cannot survive without eating. Upon deeper reflection, however, the entire process of eating flies in the face of plain logic. How is it that a human being, the highest form of creation, needs to be nourished by eating other lower forms of life, such as animals, plants and even minerals?

## Hide and Seek

To answer this question we ought to reach a better understanding of why we are here in the first place? Why did G-d create us? What does He expect of us?

The answer to this fundamental question is that G-d created an imperfect and unbalanced world, so that we can become His partners in perfecting it and straightening it out.

For example: While G-d provides much of the raw material we use for existence, only humans can transform it into useful material.

Another example closer to home: Everything possesses spiritual energy. But, G-d deliberately hid much of this energy so that we, the human beings, utilizing our intelligence and choice to do good, can discover that energy and then unleash it.

Where does G-d hide this spiritual energy? In levels of existence that are lower than the human being. By making us depend on food, we have the ability to "find" the hidden "sparks of holiness" contained in the food.

## Accessing the Energy

How do we access this energy?

By following G-d's rules about the manner in which we eat (following the kosher laws, reciting a blessing before eating, utilizing the energy that we derive from the food for good purposes etc.) we restore the hidden G-dly energy to where it belongs — within the grasp of a human being and not "confined" to the plant or animal that has no capability of using that positive energy.

From this perspective it is clear that eating is more than just a biological exercise; it is a process of reversing the imbalance G-d created in this world.

## Restoring the Imbalance

Seen in this light, we can understand why there is Mitzvah to feast on the day before Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is all about restoring the imbalance in our own lives. G-d has given us so much talent, energy and ability. Yet, so often we misuse our resources, by utilizing them for the wrong goals. Occasionally we neglect to use our talents for anything at all.

One way of dramatizing the process of redirecting misplaced energy is by engaging in eating as a prelude to the fasting of Yom Kippur. This pre-Yom Kippur feasting serves as a paradigm for the unleashing of the G-dly energy that has been misplaced and prepares us for the redirection of all our positive energies.

Once our energies are restored to their rightful place, we are ready for the next step — Yom Kippur. After having restored balance to our souls and by extension to our world, we take this processed energy and use it to soar to higher levels — we become like angels. We no longer need to get our nourishment from "other" sources;" we are able to live off the energy that we have restored to ourselves.

Yom Kippur is thus the time when we are capable of living in an ideal world where there is no need to forage for our spiritual nourishment outside of ourselves; we get all the nourishment we need from our own spiritual existence.

## Reminiscent of the World-to-Come,

Yom Kippur is therefore reminiscent of the description our Sages gave us concerning the ultimate stage in the World-to-Come, "Where there is no eating and drinking." At that advanced spiritual time, there will be no need to eat and drink, because we will no longer have to rectify and reverse imbalances in nature. Our entire focus will be to thrive on the Divinity that is contained within ourselves for our sustenance. While we cannot do that presently, Yom Kippur gives us one day during which we get a "taste" of the future.

# ESSAY SEVEN

# KOL NIDREI

In these tumultuous times that we find ourselves, we are witness to a new phenomenon: unprecedented good alongside unprecedented evil.

This phenomenon is explained in Chassidic texts as an indication that we are on the threshold of the ultimate Redemption. It is a time that is characterized by the emergence and experience of the extremes. All the latent positive as well as negative energies come to the fore.

This provides us with the strength and wherewithal to deal with the evil—which is no longer hidden.

# ESSAY SEVEN

## KOL NIDREI

### Why Renounce our Vows?

Kol Nidrei is the solemn prayer with which we commence the Yom Kippur service. This prayer was composed well over a thousand years ago and has been recited in virtually all communities since then.

Many have pointed out the apparent incongruity of making a legal pronouncement that our vows of the forthcoming year shall be declared null and void, even before we make them.

What possible purpose is served by making this declaration? And, more importantly, what connection does it have with Yom Kippur.

To begin the liturgy of Yom Kippur—the holiest day of the year, climaxing weeks of soul-searching and spiritual growth—with a legalistic pronouncement, is rather anti-climactic.

## Prayer of the Conversos

There is a tradition that traces the solemnity attached to the *Kol Nidrei* prayer to the Jews in Inquisition Era Spain, the Marranos (or, more accurately, the Conversos), who were forced into making vows to another religion.

When Yom Kippur would arrive, they would descend into secret subterranean chambers to pour out their hearts to G-d. When they said the Kol Nidrei that addresses the issue of annulling vows, they imbued that prayer with great emotion, saying, in effect, to G-d:

"Know, G-d, that we will most likely be making vows that will give the appearance that we will betraying You. Please, know G-d that these vows are not for real; they do not reflect who we really are. We will always remain faithful to You and Your Torah, despite the appearances to the contrary."

As much as everything has changed since the days of the Marranos, nothing has fundamentally changed. While, thank G-d, we are not forced to practice our Judaism in secrecy for fear of death, and we do not overtly pledge allegiance to foreign gods, we nevertheless do manage "put on an act." We live in ways that are incompatible with the true essence of our souls.

## Never Betray our True Selves

When Yom Kippur comes, we strip ourselves of the façade that we have attached to ourselves that obscures our true inner identities. Yet, we fear that in the forthcoming year we may revert to our old ways of putting on an act that belies our true feelings and commitments.

We therefore recite the Kol Nidrei, by which we declare to G-d, that we will never give credence to anything that takes us away from our true selves. We will never betray G-d because that would be betraying ourselves. And even if it seems that we will indeed regress and assume a role that is inconsistent with the Yom Kippur identity that we now experience, those new roles will never be a true reflection of us; we declare them null and void.

Yom Kippur is thus the day that we bare our souls. We remove all the layers of our personality that cover up both the realization of our negatives, as well as the realization of our true G-dly potential.

## Why Wait for Yom Kippur to do Teshuvah?

Thus, on Yom Kippur we are able to atone for all of our sins. In truth, one is required to make amends for things done wrong throughout the entire year. Why

does one have to wait until Yom Kippur to repent and change?

The answer is that throughout the year, we don't really know who we are. We do not fully appreciate what we've done. And we lack the skill and the tools to correct our mistakes. And while we might have some inkling of all the above, only on Yom Kippur do we have the complete ability to really appreciate our mistakes because on this day all the external layers of our personality that obfuscate our true nature fade away. We gain a new perspective on who we are and what we've done or failed to do.

We therefore also have the internal strength and inspiration to deal with our problems and correct them on Yom Kippur because our soul's resources are at our disposal.

## Unprecedented Evil and Good

In these tumultuous times that we find ourselves, we are witness to a new phenomenon: unprecedented good alongside unprecedented evil.

This phenomenon is explained in Chassidic texts as an indication that we are on the threshold of the ultimate Redemption. It is a time that is characterized by the emergence and experience of the extremes. All the

latent positive as well as negative energies come to the fore. This provides us with the strength and wherewithal to deal with the evil—which is no longer hidden.

This opening up of our souls to expose both our negatives and positives that occurs on Yom Kippur is becoming a reality before our eyes and will ultimately provide us with the means to expunge the evil, once and for all, and thereby usher in the Messianic Age.

May we all—and all of the Jewish people, and, indeed all of the world—be sealed for a good, sweet, prosperous, and above all, peaceful year; a world of Moshiach!

# ESSAY EIGHT

# TESHUVAH – THE ART OF RETURN

**When one expresses remorse for his or her actions, the emotional experience of remorse can counter the emotions that one experienced while he or she committed the forbidden act.**

**When we confess verbally, however, the physical act of speech is endowed with the power to neutralize the forbidden action as well.**

# ESSAY EIGHT

## TESHUVAH – THE ART OF RETURN

### The Anatomy of Teshuvah

Teshuvah, usually translated as repentance, but more accurately as return, is a process that permeates the Jewish calendar from the beginning of Elul through Yom Kippur. But at no time is the theme of Teshuvah so prominent as in the Ten Days of Teshuvah in general and the Shabbos Teshuvah (the Sabbath of Teshuvah) in particular.

By Divine providence, the entire country is now discussing the issue of repentance. What does it take to procure atonement? How does one change? Should we accept the person who claims to have repented? These are some of the questions that have been discussed recently.

Fortunately for us, the Jewish religion has had much to say about Teshuvah. Let us proceed with a breakdown of the most important components of Teshuvah as they were understood by our Talmudic sages,

Maimonides, R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi and the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

## Most Basic Requirement

The most basic requirement for Teshuvah is a resolution for the future. For example: A thief, who wishes to repent, must resolve to never steal again.

How do we know that his resolution is sincere? According to Jewish law, his intentions must be supported by action. Obviously, he must return all the stolen goods he has in is possession. Secondly, he must destroy all the "tools" of his trade. When actions demonstrate his sincere resolve not to commit this crime again, he can once more be accepted into the community and serve as a witness in a court.

But that resolve is unlikely to endure without the thief truly experiencing remorse and regret for the past, the second component of Teshuvah.

## Taking Full Responsibility

True regret involves taking full responsibility for one's misdeeds. To regret the past and then give excuses for oneself misses the whole point of Teshuvah.

For Teshuvah to be complete, one must take full responsibility for one's actions.

Indeed, Maimonides includes the discussion of free choice in the section of his *Mishneh Torah*, that discusses Teshuvah. The very notion of change dictates that one has control of his/her behavior. If one believes that we do not have free choice — and that all our actions of good and evil are predetermined — then we cannot be held responsible for our actions and we cannot change.

## Confession Counters the Act of Sin

In addition to the resolve for the future and contrition for the past one must also confess one's sins, for the process of Teshuvah to be complete. As painful as it may be, by confessing our sins, we reinforce that we have taken full responsibility for our actions. Furthermore, even if our remorse was half-hearted, the verbal confession will make it more sincere and more profound.

In addition, confession counteracts one aspect of the sin regret and remorse cannot.

According to the Tzemach Tzedek (the Third Lubavitcher Rebbe) every sinful act is a composite of two elements:

First, there is the act itself that is wrong. Even if one has no intention of harming another, if he harms the other, he has to atone for the act itself.

Second, there is also the intent. The intent and desire to commit the sin, the feelings of pleasure and satisfaction compound the severity of the crime.

When one expresses remorse for his or her actions, the **emotional** experience of remorse can counter the **emotions** that one experienced while he or she committed the forbidden act.

When we confess verbally, however, the physical **act** of speech is endowed with the power to neutralize the forbidden **action as well.**

## Asking for Forgiveness

One final requirement for Teshuvah to be complete is to ask for forgiveness by G-d and by our fellow human being against whom we may have sinned.

The formal request for forgiveness places an onus on the one who was wronged to take note of our sincere regret. According to Jewish law, as a general rule, when one has asked for forgiveness three times, it is mandatory that the wronged individual grant that forgiveness.

## Prerequisite to Moshiach

According to Maimonides, one of the prerequisites for the Messianic Age is Teshuvah.

And while the Jewish people as a whole has done Teshuvah, and their souls have been purified by virtue of the trials they had to endure, we still have to work on making the general experience of collective Teshuvah one that applies to us individually as well.

In this season of Teshuvah, we can approach G-d with the request — and even demand — that He keep His promise to bring about the Redemption, with the coming of Moshiach, imminently because we have returned to Him on both levels, communal as well as individual.

# ESSAY NINE

# YOM KIPPUR MEDITATIONS

**Talking about Redemption serves the same three functions as confession of sins:**

**It reveals our faith in the coming of Moshiach;**

**It strengthens our faith in the coming of Moshiach;**

**It creates a feeling and yearning for it even if they did not previously exist.**

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# ESSAY NINE

## YOM KIPPUR MEDITATIONS

### Viduy - Confession

Why do we confess our sins? Why doesn't it suffice to regret our wrongdoing and resolve to be better in the future? Verbal confession serves three functions:

It reveals our hidden thoughts and feelings

It enhances our feelings

Even when there are no feelings of regret and shame, verbalizing our sins, generates feelings of remorse.

Talking about Redemption serves the same three functions: It reveals and strengthens our faith in the coming of Moshiach and it creates a feeling and yearning for it even if they did not previously exist.

### Al Cheit -For the sin...

The Hebrew word used for sin, cheit, actually means defect, imperfection or void. We ask forgiveness from G-d not only for those sins that we committed

intentionally, but for our mistakes as well. Our concern on Yom Kippur is to "fill in the void." Accordingly, we must even ask forgiveness for the good deed that we performed, but fell short of the mark.

Galut/Exile, by definition, is short of the mark G-d had set for the world's destiny. When we ask G-d gor forgiveness for our sins, we are in a sense also asking G-d to atone for "His" sin, as it were, the creation of the state of Galut, so we can realize our G-d given potential.

### ...which we have committed

Why do we confess in the plural? The great Kabbalist, the Ari explained that our confession is said on behalf of all the Jewish people, for we are but one organic whole. As long as one Jew is incomplete, every Jew is incomplete.

And as long as there are still some Jews who are suffering or even not living up to their potential we are all in their shoes. This explains why the need for Moshiach and Redmeption is not only for those who are suffering, but for each and every one of us.

**U-Teshuvah, u-tefilah u-tzedakah...**

**But repentance, prayer and charity avert the severity of the decree**

Teshuvah is usually rendered "repentance." The precise translation, however, is "return." Repentance implies that one regrets committing an evil deed and now wishes to conduct oneself in a new manner. Return implies that one is essentially good, and one's innermost desire is to do what is right. Teshuvah is thus returning to one's innermost self.

Tefilah is usually translated "prayer," which connotes a request, a plea. Tefilah actually means, "to attach oneself." This attachment is relevant at all times, even when one lacks nothing and would have no reason to pray to G-d. Tefilah is the opportunity we have to strengthen our bond with G-d.

Tzedakah is usually rendered "charity." But the exact translation of the word is "justice." When one gives tzedakah, s/he is not giving his/her own, but only what has been entrusted to him/her by G-d to give to others. Secondly, everyone depends on G-d to provide for his/her needs, although G-d does not owe anything to anyone. Similarly, one is obligated to give to others, even though s/he does not owe it to them.

Our yearning for Redemption is threefold:

First, we want to return to our land and way of life we experienced in the past - Teshuvah.

Second, we want to attach ourselves to G-d; we cannot tolerate any measure of separation from Him.

Third, we want to see a just world, where all the wrongs of the past are righted; a world that everycne can see runs in accordance with G-d's plan.

**Shema Yisroel.. - Hear O Yisroel, the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is One.**

At the culmination of the fifth and last prayer of Yom Kippur, the prayer known as Ne'ilah, we recite the Shema. Shaloh writes that in the Ne'ilah prayer the Shema is recited aloud and with heartfelt kavanah (concentration). Every Jew should have the intention of giving up his life for the sanctification of G-d's name. This intention will be considered as if one had actually done so.

Chassidic thought explains that the fifth prayer corresponds to the fifth and deepest level of the soul, its essence.

On the lowest level, a Jew serves G-d because s/he has conditioned himself/herself to do so.

On the second level, one serves G-d because of the emotional appeal it has to him/her.

On the third level, one serves G-d because of one's understanding.

A fourth, level is where one expresses a feeling of self-transcendence and is driven by a very powerful will.

The deepest and most powerful level is the fifth, known as Yechidah, where the Jew is tied up with G-d in a bond that cannot be separated.

With the Yechidah revealed a Jew is then a Jew in thought, speech and action, because of no reason; it just can't be any other way.

This is the level that is associated in the writings of Kabbalah with the Moshiach and the Messianic Age.

This is what we feel when we say the Shema at the end of the service. We are prepared to give our lives, not because we are interested in sacrificing ourselves, but because it can't be any other way.

When one wants to sacrifice his or her life, there is an ego that is in the act of surrendering itself. In the mode of Yechidah there is no ego; we are one with G-d.

## Shofar

The climax of Yom Kippur is the blowing of the Shofar, which, our sages tell us, is a harbinger of the "great Shofar" that will usher in the Age of Moshiach.

The Shofar is an instrument that has the capacity to jolt us out of our Galus/exile reverie, and make us realize that we belong elsewhere.

And therefore we declare in response to the Shofar:

"L'shana Haba'ah Biyerushalayim-Next Year in Jerusalem! "

A Gemar Chasimah Tova

# ESSAY TEN

# IT DEPENDS WHO YOU ASK - YOM KIPPUR MEDITATION (2)

**From G-d's perspective, Teshuvah can bring atonement.**

**G-d's utter transcendence renders the blemish harmless.**

**To access this transcendent level of G-d, before whom sin is irrelevant, we must arouse a similar transcendent response from within our soul.**

# ESSAY TEN

## IT DEPENDS WHO YOU ASK - YOM KIPPUR MEDITATION (2)

Wisdom was asked: "What is the proper punishment for a sinner?"

Wisdom answered: "The sinners shall be pursued by evil." (Proverbs 13:)

Prophecy was asked: "What is the proper punishment for a sinner?"

Prophecy answered: "The soul of the sinner shall die." (Ezekiel 18:)

Torah was asked: "What is the proper punishment for a sinner?"

Torah answered: "Let him bring guilt offering and he will be forgiven."

**The Holy One Blessed be He was asked: "What is the proper punishment for a sinner?"**

**The Holy One Blessed be He answered: "Let him do *Teshuvah* and he will be forgiven." This is the meaning of the verse: "G-d is good and just, He therefore shows the sinners on the way." He shows the sinners the way they can do *Teshuvah.***

In this passage from the Jerusalem Talmud, we find four different responses to the sinner. They reflect four different perspectives.

## Perspective of Wisdom

From the perspective of wisdom or logic, the sinner will be pursued by his evil.

Logic dictates that the punishment is a direct consequence of the sin. Sin and suffering are cause and effect. The degree of punishment is thus commensurate with the degree of the sin.

## Perspective of Prophecy

From the perspective of prophecy the soul of the sinner shall die.

Prophecy is a line of communication with the Divine. A sin – even unintentional – severs that connection.

Prophecy thus declares that the sinner must die, inasmuch as his connection has been severed.

Death in this case can be meant in a spiritual sense in that the degree of communication between the person and G-d is weakened. In the most extreme situations, when the link becomes so weakened to the point that it is severed, it can actually lead to physical death as well.

## Perspective of Torah

From the perspective of Torah, the person can atone by bringing a sacrifice. Torah is **G-d's** wisdom. It therefore transcends even the level of prophecy. Thus, a prophet may not introduce any new Torah laws. From the perspective of Torah, the sin is far more serious than even from the perspective of prophecy, for Torah is far more sensitive to a breach of its commandments. Arguably, even death cannot atone for this.

Torah is, however, a Torah of kindness (*Toras Chesed*). Torah thus considers the mitigating factor that "a person does not sin unless a spirit of folly enters into him," and that sin is caused by the (superimposed) **animal** nature within man. The Torah thus provides for a solution – an **animal** sacrifice – that underscores

how sin derives exclusively from the person's animal nature that dominated at the time of the transgression.

## Perspective of G-d

From G-d's perspective, Teshuvah can bring atonement.

On the one hand, one can argue, a transgression, from the perspective of G-d Himself, is more acute, and would hardly be considered pardonable.

On the other hand, G-d's utter transcendence renders the blemish harmless, as Job declared: "If your sins multiply, what have you done to him?" To access this transcendent level of G-d, before whom sin is irrelevant, we must arouse a similar transcendent response from within our soul.

This is the essence of *Teshuvah*, where we transform ourselves from one extreme to the other.

In Rambam's words:

> "*Teshuvah* is when the One who knows all secrets can testify that he (the sinner) will no longer return to his folly."

This generates a reciprocal response from G-d, who will elevate the erstwhile sinner from the deep spiritual abyss – to the pinnacle of holiness.

Indeed, our sages declare that

> "Where the *Ba'alei Teshuvah* (Masters of *Teshuvah*) stand, even the most perfectly righteous people cannot stand."

Yom Kippur provides us with a most unique opportunity to be able to change and transform ourselves from one extreme to the other. The culmination of this process will take place with the coming of Moshiach. At that time, we will be able to access the innermost essence of our souls, because G-d will have revealed His essence to us.

May we all be sealed for a good and sweet year and a year of Redemption in all senses of the word.

# ESSAY ELEVEN

# YOM KIPPUR AND SUKKOS: THE LINK

**There is an obvious reason for the sense of urgency conveyed by the requirement to build the Sukkah *immediately* after Yom Kippur.**

**One should always connect a resolution for the good to something concrete.**

**If time is allowed to elapse between the time when one makes a commitment for the good, albeit sincere, and its implementation, there is always the danger that the inspiration will fizzle out.**

# ESSAY ELEVEN

## YOM KIPPUR AND SUKKOS: THE LINK

### What's the Urgency?

As soon as Yom Kippur is over, it is customary to begin building the Sukkah. Indeed, we are told by Jewish legal authorities that we should not delay the building - or at least, the talking about the building - of the Sukkah.

There is an obvious reason for the sense of urgency conveyed by the requirement to build the Sukkah *immediately* after Yom Kippur. One should always connect a resolution for the good to something concrete. If time is allowed to elapse between the time when one makes a commitment for the good, albeit sincere, and its implementation, there is always the danger that the inspiration will fizzle out.

### Preventing Compartmentalization

On a deeper level, one can suggest a more specific connection between Yom Kippur and the Mitzvah of Sukkah. One of our greatness weaknesses is that we

tend to compartmentalize our moral and Jewish lives. This attitude renders us vulnerable, for even as we find times and places for doing what is right, we tend to find times and places where Jewish values become irrelevant. When Yom Kippur comes to an end, it is natural for us to look for ways of preventing any relapses. What can we do to keep us strong in our moral and spiritual lives?

The answer is the mitzvah of Sukkah.

The Sukkah is the one Mitzvah which envelops the entire person. For one week, we enter into the Sukkah with our entire body, our clothing - even our boots! This Mitzvah repudiates the notion of a part time Jewish existence, and is, therefore, the most efficient means to preserving the resolutions of Yom Kippur.

## Representative of Messianic Age

Both Yom Kippur and Sukkos are representative of the future Messianic Age.

On Yom Kippur we get in touch with the core of our soul that is always pure and holy and provides us with a taste of holiness of the Messianic Age.

Sukkos provides the ability to translate that core into every facet of our being portending the time when the "knowledge of G-d will cover the entire world."

# ESSAY TWELVE

# THE THREE QUESTIONS

**These three aspects of Yom Kippur, harnessing our Ten Faculties, uniting with all of the Jewish people and radiating the light of our Divine souls, is what the Messianic Age is all about.**

**Moshiach, the leader who ushers in the Redemption, exemplifies totality; he harnesses all his Ten Faculties, unites the Jewish people, his soul is on fire and ignites the souls of all Jews.**

# ESSAY TWELVE

## THE THREE QUESTIONS

### The Preparation for Shabbos and Yom Kippur

This year Yom Kippur coincides with Shabbos. This is in addition to the fact that Yom Kippur itself is referred to in the Torah as Shabbos Shabboson, the Sabbath of Sabbaths.

It is axiomatic in Judaism that everything holy requires preparation; certainly, that is so for a day as holy as a Yom Kippur which coincides with Shabbos.

The Mishnah (Shabbos 34a) states:

> "There are three things a man must say in his home on the eve of Shabbos just before dark:
>
> '*Asartem*-Have you tithed (separated a tenth of the produce that will be eaten during Shabbos);
>
> *Aravtem*-Have you made an *eiruv* (a legal process through which one is permitted to carry within a common courtyard. This process has the capacity to render jointly owned property as one domain); and

*Hadliku es Haner*-Kindle the [Shabbos] light!'"

A Chassidic Master, Sar Shalom of Belz, applied these three instructions to our preparation for Yom Kippur:

"*Asartem*-Have you tithed" can be translated, "have you performed the ten?" This he interprets as have you successfully returned to G-d during the **Ten** Days of Teshuvah?

*"Aravtem*-Have you made an *eiruv"* - Have you benefitted from the spiritual power of *erev*-the eve of Yom Kippur.

[The day before Yom Kippur is also a holy day. It is a Mitzvah to eat in preparation for Yom Kippur, and we are regarded as if we have fasted two days!]

*"Hadliku es Haner"* – Have you kindled the light of Yom Kippur?

## Engaged in "Ten"

One may expand this approach and give an expanded interpretation of the word for each of these three questions:

The first question: "have you tithed" can be interpreted to mean "have you engaged in 'ten?'" Have you come to Yom Kippur with all the ten faculties of your soul?

These ten faculties include all of our intellectual and emotional faculties, as well as our thoughts, speech and actions.

Or, perhaps, are you missing some of your faculties? Are you lacking a serious intellectual understanding of Judaism; are you content to remain at the kindergarten level of understanding?

Have you left your heart somewhere else and invested your passion in areas of life other than Judaism?

Have you developed skills in other areas of life but are a novice when it comes to Jewish skills?

While these questions are addressed to those who have scant knowledge and feeling for Judaism, they can also be addressed to the most advanced. Have they used all of their "brain power" to study and fathom the deeper meanings of Torah? Do they truly love G-d with all their heart, soul and might? And are they as scrupulous with observance of the small but significant details of the Mitzvos, as they are with other important aspects of life?

## What about Unity?

The second question: Have you created an *eiruv* (the legal procedure to render a semi-public/semi-private area into a private domain) and thereby united people

who dwell in these areas? The word for *eiruv*, can also be rendered as intermingled, responsible and sweet.

Have you come to Yom Kippur as a loner, detached from the community, or do you approach this holy day with a sense of being a part of the unity of all Jews; how we are all responsible for each other because we are all connected, and each of us feels the sweetness of the other?

However, unity with others is facilitated when a person experiences inner unity and tranquility. The question therefore can be raised, have you coordinated and allowed all of your faculties to work in tandem? Or do your mind, heart and behavior go in different directions?

So many of us understand what is right and good for us, but fail to experience the proper emotions.

Similarly, we may have deep feelings for Torah and its commandments but we may still fail to translate these feelings into action.

This lack of unity gets in our way as we approach Yom Kippur. These questions must be answered in the affirmative in order to gain the most from the Yom Kippur experience.

## Souls on Fire

And now we turn to the final question: Have you illuminated your soul, G-d's candle, and the soul of others? Do you realize the spiritual power we each have, no matter how low we may have sunken? We all possess a Neshama, a Divine soul that is G-d's light, as it says, "The soul of man is G-d's light."

The question asked in another way is: do we reflect G-d's light? Some who may satisfactorily answer the first two questions may still need to know whether their soul is being fully expressed.

If the answer to all of these three questions is yes, we are ready to enter into the holiest day of the year!

## Kol Nidrei

To provide satisfactory answers to these three pivotal questions, we must not be fettered and entangled with outside influences and commitments that we may have made to other g-ds and alien -isms. These entanglements diminish our potential to be our true selves, with all of our faculties intact and our soul's flame glowing.

The Kol Nidrei prayer, with which we usher in the Holiest day of the year, is all about renouncing the undesirable commitments we may have made.

Through Kol Nidrei, we sever our ties with the fake "me" and reconnect to the authentic "me," the one whose Ten Faculties are intact and united; the one whose soul's flame is radiant!

At Kol Nidrei we will hear the resounding answers to the three questions:

**Yes,** we have gathered all of our Ten Faculties and brought them with us to Yom Kippur!

**Yes**, we have integrated ourselves in the Jewish community; we feel an integral part of the community, whose sorrows and joys are ours! And

**Yes**, we have kindled the flame of our souls!

## The Three Components of Moshiach

These three aspects of Yom Kippur, harnessing our Ten Faculties, uniting with all of the Jewish people and radiating the light of our Divine souls, is what the Messianic Age is all about.

Moshiach, the leader who ushers in the Redemption, exemplifies totality; he harnesses all his Ten Faculties, unites the Jewish people, his soul is on fire and ignites the souls of all Jews.

While in Galus-exile, we have a hard time expressing ourselves, connecting to others and allowing our souls to shine brightly.

As we prepare for Yom Kippur, the ultimate Shabbos of the year, we are simultaneously preparing for the ultimate Shabbos of history: the Redemption from all the entanglements of Galus.

May everyone have a *G'mar Chasimah Tova* (May you be sealed in the Book of life for good); and a *G'mar Chasimah* of Galus with the imminent revelation of Moshiach!